

Healthwatch Luton

Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure

This is a policy for Healthwatch Luton's (HWL) Board members, staff and Champions.

Healthwatch are required to have in place their own policy and procedures in respect of Safeguarding including child protection that covers all services delivered. Healthwatch Luton (HWL) have a standard safeguarding policy relating to all and vulnerable people. This policy is directly associated with children and young people.

Policy

1. Healthwatch Luton commits that children must be protected from serious or significant harm at all times.
2. We believe every child should be valued, safe and encouraged to meet their potential. We want to make sure that children and young people are encouraged to be empowered to tell us (Board members and staff) if they perceive they are suffering harm.
3. We will achieve this by having an effective child protection procedure and following National and Local guidance.
4. If we discover or suspect a child is suffering significant harm we will notify Children's Social Care Services or the police in order that they can be appropriately protected.
5. This child protection policy and our child protection procedure apply to all Board Directors and staff and Champions.
6. We will review our child protection policy and procedures at least every 2 years (or sooner if the law, Local or National policy dictates) to make sure they are still relevant and effective.

Child Protection Procedure

Referrals to Healthwatch Luton - Board members, Staff and Champions

When members of the Board, Champions and staff are contacted by an adult or child where there are concerns about the welfare of a child or an unborn baby, they should contact the local Children's Social Care of the area in which the child lives/is found or, in the case of an unborn baby.

If urgent situations arise outside office hours, the Board, Champions and staff should contact the relevant Emergency Duty Service/Out of Hours Team.

The NSPCC helpline offers an alternative means of reporting concerns.

Individuals may prefer to remain anonymous when reporting suspicions.

Anonymous referrals by members of the public will be investigated thoroughly by Children's Social Care.

Individuals making the referral may disclose their identity, but not wish for it to be revealed to the parents/carers of the child concerned. Wherever possible, HWL staff should respect the referrer's request for anonymity. There are however certain limited circumstances in which the identity of a referrer may have to be given, i.e. in the court arena or to investigating policy for example.

Confidentiality is important and should be managed professionally.

General Principles

- i. Remember that the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information and contacting Children's Social Care but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately;
- ii. Be open and honest with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or

could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so;

- iii. Seek advice / share if you are in any doubt, consult with another Board member or the COO but do not delay making contact with Children's Social Care.
- iv. Share with consent where appropriate and where possible; respect the wishes of those who do not give consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent and contact Children's Social Care if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest/ where there is a risk of serious harm. You will need to base your judgment on the facts of the case.
- v. Consider safety and well-being: Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and wellbeing of the person and others who may be affected by their actions;
- vi. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely;
- vii. Keep a record of your actions and decision with your rationale - for example why you decided to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose. It is expected that serious matters of a child protection nature are at the very least explored and discussed with other relevant professionals in order that a course of action can be agreed and put in place promptly. It would be rare to not share a suspicion, concern or piece of hearsay information just in case there is substance behind the knowledge. There may also be trends and patterns which the team are unaware of, but which other professionals have logged or are working with.